A Short Guide to Prepare and Give Technical Presentations
David E. Rosenberg

Basic Rules
- Your presentation will be seen as a reflection of <u>your</u> competence and organization.
- Focus the presentation on 1-3 important messages.
- Tailor the presentation for the audience, location, and time limit.
- Stay in the time limit. Narrow the presentation scope to stay in the limit.
- Accommodate a wide range of audience learning styles (auditory, visual, experiential, interactive, and combinations of the above) and abilities.
- Clear presentations require clear thoughts, proper preparation, and practice.

Presentation Parts and their Purposes

Title and Introduction
- Have a good title.
- Include your name, affiliation, and contact info.
- Share the main point(s) of the presentation.

Outline
- Foreshadow the logical development of the presentation
- Identify recognizable landmarks so the audience can chart progress

Intermediate Sections
Structure intermediate sections to follow the logical development. Each section and sub-section should represent one step of development in a train of thought. Omit un-necessary information.

Conclusions
Conclusions should briefly summarize and reiterate the presentation's key point(s).

Questions and Answers (Q&A)
Encourage questions. Always allow time for questions and answers. Tell the audience your preferred time to handle questions (while you speak or at the end). Note violations to your preferred method by kindly reiterating your preferred method. Wait for the questioner to finish before answering. In large venues, repeat (and summarize) questions so everyone can hear. Keep answers short. If you do not know, confess ignorance, acknowledge that you have not considered the point, or identify potential sources for the answer. Deflect hostile questions and never argue. Instead, acknowledge a difference of opinion or suggest further discussion later.

Seven Steps for Successful Presentations   **David E. Rosenberg**

1) Gauge Your Audience
⇒ Discuss the topic to spark and maintain audience interest and attention.
⇒ Use simple language and vocabulary familiar to the audience.
⇒ State important points early and repeat again at the end. People often leave early or require several times to correctly understand information.

2) Create a Train of Thought for the Audience to Follow
⇒ Structure your presentation. Break complex ideas into simpler components.
⇒ Early on, tell the audience the structure the presentation will follow.
⇒ Use headings and subsections to reinforce your train of thought.

3) Make the presentation easy and engaging
⇒ Use tables, figures, pictures, visuals, audios, activities, or text to focus, illustrate, develop, summarize, and communicate your train of thought.
⇒ Number each slide.
⇒ Use mathematics and equations sparingly. Focus on assumptions, solution approach, and interpretation of solutions.
⇒ Avoid repetition and don't repeat yourself. Audience members will quickly lose focus from a monotonous presentation.
⇒ Try not to read from the slides; use slides to organize and illustrate your talk.

5) Use visuals, but….
⇒ Keep visuals bold, simple, and colorful.
⇒ Make bullet point text concise yet self-explanatory. No more, no less.
⇒ Limit tables to 4 columns and 8 rows. More risks information overload.
⇒ Limit graphs to 1, 2, or at most 4 curves. Label curves rather than use legends.
⇒ Generally, take at least 1 minute to explain each visual.
⇒ Remove all extraneous annotations from visuals that you will not discuss.

6) Practice Beforehand
⇒ Say points aloud to "hear" how they sound.
⇒ Get a sense for the time needed to cover various sections.
⇒ Practice in front of supportive people. Then, solicit their suggestions to improve.
⇒ Develop a backup plan for technical difficulties.

7) Relax During the Presentation
⇒ Check with your audience to ensure they can hear you and see visuals.
⇒ Speak clearly and at a natural pace. Project your voice so everyone can hear.
⇒ Dress comfortably but appropriately.
⇒ Maintain eye contact with your audience. Switch among several individuals. Avoid reading straight from visuals or note cards.
⇒ Write out and read your first 1-2 sentences. This will get you started.

⇒ If you "freeze up", …
1. Don't panic!
2. Take a deep breath and count to 3.
3. Recall your previous point.
4. Try to remember the next point.
5. Still frozen? Return to step #1 or acknowledge & move on.